

LEO WEARS

BORN 30 JUNE 1918. LOWERY CITY MO. ENLISTED US MARINE CORPS 5 OCT 1936. RECRUIT TRAINING, MARINE CORPS RECRUIT CENTER, SAN DIEGO ,CAL.

SERVED IN SHANGHAI, CHINA. MARCH 1937 TO AUGUST 1939,. AMMUNITION DEPOT, MARE ISLAND CA. SEPTEMBER 1939 TO SEPTEMBER 1941. SERVED ON BOARD THE USS OKLAHOMA SEPTEMBER 1941 TO DEC 7 1941 (2 ½ MONTHS), GUN CAPTAIN OF 5" GUN.

ATTACK ANNOUNCED ON SHIP PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM. IT SEEMED THE FIRST TORPEDO HIT SHIP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT. I STARTED FOR MY BATTLE STATION, SHIP BEGAN TO LIST TO PORT. AFTER MORE TORPEDOES AFTER MORE TORPEDOES HIT SHIP. I QUICKLY REALIZED I COULD NOT REACH MY BATTLE STATION. ON REACHING THE MAIN DECK PROCEEDED TOWARD STARBOARD SIDE OF SHIP. MORE TORPEDOES HIT, AS SHIP CONTINUED TO ROLL TO PORT I CLIMBED THROUGH SHIP STARBOARD RAIL, ON TO SIDE OF SHIP, THEN ON TO BOTTOM. I WATCHED AS THREE PLANES FLEW TOWARDS THE ROW OF SHIPS. BOMBS WERE RELEASED AND I WATCHED AS ONE HIT THE USS ARIZONA, SECONDS LATER THE TERRIBLE EXPLOSION OCCURRED. AT THAT TIME I SPOKE WITH A FELLOW MARINE ABOUT THAT THE CHANCE THE NEXT BOMBS MIGHT HIT US. ROPES WERE HANGING OVER THE BOTTOM OF THE SHIP, WHICH HAD BEEN TIED TO THE USS MARYLAND. WE DECIDED WE SHOULD SLIDE DOWN THE ROPE AND SWIM TO THE USS MARYLAND. AFTER WE ENTERED THE WATER A WHALE BOAT STOPPED, WE CLIMBED ABOARD AND SUBSEQUENTLY WERE TAKEN ALONG SIDE THE USS MARYLAND AND CLIMBED UP A ROPE LADDER.

ON REACHING THE MAIN DECK I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD DO. I SAW THE TWO QUAD MOUNT ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN BATTERIES AND REALIZED THAT THERE WERE LINES OF MEN PASSING AMMUNITION FROM THE ELEVATOR TO THE GUNS. THESE MEN WERE STRUGGLING TO KEEP ENOUGH AMMUNITION TO GUNS. I JOINED THE LINE BEHIND ONE OF THE GUNS. WHEN THE FIRST ATTACK ENDED I REALIZED THAT MY LEFT EAR WAS ACHING, I LATER LEARNED THAT THE EARDRUM WAS PERFORATED, IT DID NOT CAUSE A DISABILITY. WHEN THE SECOND ATTACK BEGAN, I TOOK MY POSITION BEHIND THE GUN AND CONTINUED THAT UNTIL THE ATTACK WAS OVER..

WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT NO MORE ATTACKS WERE LIKELY AT THAT TIME, I GATHERED SEVERAL MARINES FROM THE OKLAHOMA AN WE LEFT THE MARYLAND BY WAY OF A WATER PIPE LINE, AND WE PROCEEDED TO THE RUNWAY OF THE AIRFIELD ON FORD ISLAND. MY FELLOW MARINES AN I FOUND THE ARMORY WHERE WE OBTAINED A 30 CALIBER MACHINE GUN AND AMMUNITION WITH A SPECIAL TRIPOD MOUNT, WHICH WE SET UP ALONG SIDE THE RUNWAY. WE CONTINUED TO STAND BY THAT GUN THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND NIGHT UNTIL WE WERE RELIEVED BY ONE OF OUR OFFICERS. ALL MARINES OF THE OKLAHOMA THAT COULD BE LOCATED WERE TRANSPORTED, BY BOAT TO THE NAVY YARD DOCK, THEN BY TRUCK TO THE MARINE BARRACKS, NAVY YARD PEARL HARBOR. I REMAINED AT THE MARINE BARRACKS PEARL HARBOR UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1942. IN EARLY 1942 I WAS AWARDED A LETTER OF COMMENDATION, WITH RIBBON, AND WAS PROMOTED TO THEE NEXT HIGHER RANK (PLATOON SARGENT) BY ORDER OF ADMIRAL NIMITZ.

I WAS PROMOTED TO FIRST SARGENT IN LATE 1942 AND BECAME ACTING

SARGENT MAJOR OF A BATTALION IN THE 5th AMPHIBIOUS. IN 1943 I WAS ORDERED TO OFFICERS SCHOOL IN QUANTICO, . WAS COMMISSIONED A SECOND LIEUTENANT IN 1944, REMAINED AS AN INSTRUCTOR IN THE SCHOOL.

I SERVED IN VARIOUS UNITS AND STATIONS SUCH AS 1st MARINE DIVISION IN CHINA (1946-48). LATER IN SAN DIEGO, CA, EL TORO, IN SANTA ANA CA. JAPAN, KOREA WHERE I WAS AWARDED A BRONZE STAR W/COMBAT V. LATER IN HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS, WAS PROMOTED TO MAJOR IN 1955, THEN SERVED IN OKINAWA, AND MY FINAL STATION IN CAMP PENDLETON CA, WHERE I RETIRED IN 1964.

MY WIFE AND I WERE MARRIED 8 APRIL 1943, HAVE TWO CHILDREN, THREE GRAND CHILDREN. ONE CHILD (OUR FIRST DID NOT SURVIVE AND IS BURIED IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY IN AREA, KNOWN IN 1944 AS BABYLAND.)

ON 30 JUNE 2004, AS WE APPROACH THE 63rd ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, I WILL BE 86 YEARS OLD AND WILL HAVE BEEN RETIRED FROM THE U.S. MARINE CORPS FOR 40 YEARS

I AM A MEMBER OF THE PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION, AND A MEMBER OF CHAPTER 32, IMPERIAL COUNTY CALIFORNIA PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS.. ONLY SIX MEMBERS NOW SURVIVE ON THIS DATE 12 APRIL 2004